

THE MATRIX MODEL

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Relapse Prevention Group Handouts

INTENSIVE OUTPATIENT
ALCOHOL & DRUG TREATMENT

A 16 -Week Individualized Program

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Be Smart, Not Strong

“I can be around drugs or alcohol. I am certain I don’t want to use, and once I make up my mind, I’m very strong.”

...

“I have been doing well, and I think it’s time to test myself and see if I can be around friends who are using. It’s just a matter of willpower.”

...

“I think I can have a drink and not use speed. I never had a problem with alcohol anyway.”

Staying drug and alcohol free does not depend on strength. People who are able to maintain abstinence do it by being smart. They know that the key to not drinking and not using is to keep far away from relapse situations. The closer you get, the more likely a relapse becomes. If drugs or alcohol appears unexpectedly, and you are close to them and to friends who are drinking and using, your chances of using are much greater than if you weren’t in that situation. Smart people stay sober by avoiding triggers for as long as possible.

DON’T BE STRONG. BE SMART.

How smart are you being? Rate how well you are doing in avoiding relapse:

	POOR	FAIR	GOOD	EXCELLENT
1. Practicing thought stopping	1	2	3	4
2. Scheduling	1	2	3	4
3. Keeping appointments	1	2	3	4
4. Avoiding triggers	1	2	3	4
5. Not using alcohol	1	2	3	4
6. Not using drugs	1	2	3	4
7. Avoiding drug and alcohol users	1	2	3	4
8. Avoiding drug and alcohol places	1	2	3	4
9. Exercising	1	2	3	4
10. Being truthful	1	2	3	4
11. Going to Twelve Step or other outside support meetings	1	2	3	4

Total Recovery IQ _____

Defining Spirituality

What does *spirituality* mean to you?
Check those definitions that seem to apply.



1. Spirituality is

- _____ A person's relationship with God
- _____ The deepest level from which a human being operates
- _____ The philosophical context of a person's life (values, rules, attitudes, and views)
- _____ The same as religion

The second and third definitions describe spirituality in a broad sense. Many people believe that these broad definitions are the most useful way to think of spirituality. They view being spiritual as something that has to do with a person's spirit or soul, as distinguished from the physical nature. Some people believe the level and degree of spirituality in a person's life will dictate the quality of life. In *Finding Inner Peace* (1988), Earnie Larsen suggests you can assess the quality of your spirituality by answering the following questions: *

2. How much is enough? (What do you want from life, and are you getting it?)

3. Upon what is my security based? (What would it take to destroy you?)

4. Who do I have to be before I approve of myself? (What qualities are most important to you?)

DEFINING SPIRITUALITY | *continued from other side*

5. What does *success* mean to me? (What does “making it” mean?)

6. What would be the most comfortable and easy way for me to increase the spiritual aspects of my own life, should I choose to do so?

...

In order to have a drug- and alcohol-free life for a long period of time, the recovering person has to be comfortable within himself or herself. Gaining a sense of spirituality gives many people the inner peace that makes using drugs and alcohol unnecessary. The Twelve Step programs provide one way to gain or regain a love of yourself and of life.



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Taking Care of Business and Managing Money

Maintaining a full-blown addiction takes lots of time and energy. There may be very little time or thought given to normal responsibilities during an addictive period. The lifestyle of an addicted person is usually one that is obviously irresponsible.

Taking Care of Business

When recovery begins, forgotten and neglected responsibilities come flooding back. It is sometimes overwhelming to think about all the things that need to be done. It is also frustrating and time consuming to catch up on so many responsibilities.

Determine where you stand with regard to taking care of your business by thinking about the following questions:

1. Do you have outstanding traffic tickets?
2. Have you filed all your tax returns to date?
3. Are there unpaid bills you need to make arrangements to pay?
4. What repair and maintenance needs of your house or apartment are necessary?
5. Does your car need to be serviced or repaired?
6. Do you have adequate insurance—health, home, car, and life insurance?
7. Do you have a checking account or some way to manage your finances?
8. Are you handling daily living chores (such as grocery shopping, laundry, and cleaning)?

If you try to do all this at once, you may feel overwhelmed and hopeless. Take one or two items each week and focus on clearing up one area at a time. Dealing with these issues will help you regain a sense of control over your life.

1. The first item of business I need to take care of is

TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS AND MANAGING MONEY | *continued*

2. I will start by

3. The second item of business I need to take care of is

4. I will start by

Managing Money

Being in control of your finances is being in control of your life.

5. When people with addictions are actively using, their out-of-control lifestyle is often reflected in monetary ways. Check any of the following that have been true for you.

_____ Any money over _____ is a trigger to buy drugs or alcohol.

_____ I have used money secretly to buy drugs or alcohol.

_____ I have to deal with large outstanding debts.

_____ I have been negligent in paying taxes.

_____ I owe money on traffic warrants.

_____ I gamble with my money.

_____ I spend compulsively when I feel bad.

_____ I frequently argue about money with family members.

_____ I have stolen money.

TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS AND MANAGING MONEY

Often, when patients first enter treatment, they choose to give control of their money to someone they trust. Having another person handle your money will not work unless it is done at your request. In making the decision, you are controlling your own finances and asking the trusted person to act as your banker.

When you and your therapist decide you can safely handle money again, you can begin working toward gaining financial maturity. You may choose to have some of the following goals:

- Arrange to pay off large debts in small, regular payments.
- Budget your money in a way similar to scheduling your time.
- Arrange spending agreements with anyone who shares your finances.
- Use bank accounts to help you manage your money.
- Live within your means.
- Eventually, have a savings plan.

6. List any other financial goals you have.

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Relapse Justification I

*Once a person decides not to use drugs and alcohol anymore, how does he or she end up doing it again?
Does it happen completely by accident, or is there some way of avoiding the relapse?*

Relapse justification is a process that happens in people's minds. If a decision has been made to stop using and drinking, but the addiction still has strength, the game gets tricky. The addicted part of the brain invents excuses that move the addicted person close enough to relapse situations that accidents can and do happen. You may remember times when you were planning to stay drug or alcohol free, and such a situation happened before you used again.

Use the questions below to help you identify justifications your addicted brain might use. You can then interrupt the relapse process.

Accidents or Other People's Influence

Does your addicted brain ever try to convince you that you have no choice or that an unexpected situation caught you off guard? Have you ever said one of the following statements to yourself?

- It was offered to me. What could I do?
- An old friend called, and we decided to get together.
- I was cleaning my house and found drugs I'd forgotten about.
- I had friends come for dinner, and they brought me some wine.
- I was in a bar, and someone offered me a beer.
- Other _____

Catastrophic Events

Is there one unlikely, major event that is the *only* reason you would use? What might such an event be for you? How would using drugs or alcohol improve the situation?

- My spouse left me. There's no reason to stay clean.
- I just got injured. It's ruined all of my plans. I might as well use.
- I just lost my job. Why not use?
- Other _____

RELAPSE JUSTIFICATION I | *continued from other side***Specific Purposes**

Has your addicted brain ever suggested that using a certain drug or alcohol is the only way to accomplish something?

- I'm gaining weight and need stimulants to control how much I eat.
- I'm out of energy. I'll function better if I'm using.
- I need drugs to meet people more easily.
- I can't enjoy sex without using.
- Other _____

Depression, Anger, Loneliness, and Fear

Does feeling depressed, angry, lonely, or afraid make using seem like the answer? Is it really?

- I'm depressed. What difference does it make if I use or not?
- When I get mad enough, I can't control what I do.
- I'm scared. I know how to make the feeling go away.
- If he or she thinks I've used, I might as well use.
- Other _____

What might you do when your addicted brain asks these questions?

...



Taking Care of Yourself

Addicted people often do not take care of themselves. You may not have enough time or energy to attend to health and grooming when you are using. How you look becomes unimportant. Health is secondary to drug and alcohol use. Not caring for oneself is a major factor in loss of self-esteem among people with an addiction. To “esteem” something means you value it. You acknowledge its importance.

Recovering people need to recognize their own value. In recovery, your own health and appearance become more important as you care more for yourself. Their importance is part of starting to like and even respect yourself.

Attending to the following will strengthen your image of yourself as a healthy, drug- and alcohol-free, recovering person:

1. Have you seen a doctor for a thorough checkup?
2. When is the last time you went to the dentist?
3. Have you considered getting a “new look” the next time you cut your hair?
4. Are you paying attention to what you are eating? Is it too much, too little, or of adequate nutritional value?
5. Do you still wear the same clothes you wore during your using episodes?
6. Do you need to have your vision or hearing checked?
7. What exercise do you do regularly?
8. Is your caffeine or nicotine intake out of control?

If addressing all these things at once is too overwhelming, work on one or two items each week. Decide which are the most important and do them first. As you look and feel better, you will increase both the strength and the pleasure of your recovery.

The first thing I need to do to take care of myself is

• • •



Dangerous Emotions

For many people, certain emotional states are “red flag” feelings, often viewed by people in recovery as “the reason I use.” It seems, to people in recovery, that if they could avoid ever feeling lonely, angry, or deprived, they would never relapse. The emotional trigger leads to automatic use.



The most common negative emotional triggers are the following:

Loneliness: It is difficult to give up friends and activities that are part of a drug- and alcohol-using lifestyle. Being separated from friends and family leaves people feeling lonely. Often, nonusing friends and family members are not ready to get together with the addicted person. They are not ready to risk getting back into a relationship that didn’t work earlier. The recovering person is stranded between groups of friends, and the feeling of loneliness can become a driving force that moves him or her back to using.

Anger: The intense irritability experienced in the early stages of recovery can result in floods of anger that are, for many people, instantly triggering. The rage comes directly from the limbic area, the addicted brain. Once a person is into that frame of mind, it is a short trip to drug or alcohol use and possibly a long trip back to the rational state of mind.

Deprivation: Becoming drug and alcohol free is a real accomplishment. Usually, recovering people feel very good and proud about what they have been able to do. Recovery is a positive thing. Sometimes situations exist that make recovering people feel like they have to give up “good times and good things.” Recovery becomes a negative state. It becomes a sentence, something to be endured. Feeling that using behavior is positive, and sober behavior is negative, quickly leads to relapse.



It is important to be aware of these “red flag” emotions. Allowing yourself to be flooded with these powerful negative emotions is allowing yourself to be swept rapidly toward relapsing.

1. Have any of these emotional states been a trigger for you in the past? Explain.

DANGEROUS EMOTIONS | *continued from other side*

2. Are there any other negative emotional states that are dangerous for you? Explain.



One of the goals during the recovery process is learning to separate thoughts, behaviors, and emotions. Once you learn this, it is possible for you to control what you think and how you behave. So that you are not always acting only on your feelings, it is important to recognize and begin to try to understand your emotions.

Many people find writing to be a good tool for recognizing and understanding how they feel and why they feel that way. It is not necessary to be a good writer to use this tool. It is often used by people who do not like to write and who have never written much in the past. Follow these simple instructions and try a new way of getting to know yourself:

- Find a private, comfortable, quiet place just for writing, and try to write a little each day.
- Begin by taking several deep breaths and relaxing.
- Write in response to a question that you have asked yourself about your feelings. (“What am I feeling right now?” “Why am I angry?” “Why am I sad?”)
- If something is bothering you, and you can’t get started writing, ask yourself the following:
 - What is going on?
 - Is there really a problem, or am I making the situation bigger than it is?
 - How do I really feel about this?
 - What can I do about this?
- Allow the words to flow; forget spelling or punctuating correctly.

Doing this can help prevent you from blaming other people and things for how you feel. Any time you write about something, it becomes much clearer to you. It can also help you avoid the emotional buildup process that often leads to relapse.

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